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SUBJECT: REPORT FROM THE FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY'S "SUMMER UNIVERSITY" 2005

REF: A. (A) EMBASSY PARIS SIPERNET DAILY REPORT FOR

29AUG05

[1B.](#) (B) EMBASSY PARIS SIPERNET DAILY REPORT FOR

26AUG05

[1C.](#) (C) EMBASSY PARIS SIPERNET DAILY REPORT FOR

24AUG05

[1D.](#) (D) EMBASSY PARIS SIPERNET DAILY REPORT FOR

11AUG05

[1E.](#) (E) PARIS 3722 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Josiah Rosenblatt for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[1.](#) (C) France's Socialist Party (PS) held the thirteenth edition of its annual "Summer University" on August 26 - 28 (ref D). This year, party leaders used the event to start drawing up the battle lines (ref C) between the rival populist and progressive factions -- the 'no' and the 'yes' camps that emerged from the May 29 referendum on the proposed EU Constitution (ref E). These factions are contending for leadership of the party in the run-up to the party congress on November 18 - 20. All active PS politicians insist that media speculation about a possible break-up of the party is overdone (ref B).

[2.](#) (C) Party members used this year's "Summer University" to size up in person the party's many would-be presidential nominees (ref A). Former Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn emerged as the pace-setter among the presidential contenders. Former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius failed to generate the groundswell of support he had hoped for among the opponents of the proposed EU Constitution and of the current party leader, Francois Hollande. Hollande, in his self-appointed role as the champion of transparency and democratic decision-making within the party, emerged strengthened in his position as party chief. END SUMMARY.

"CURRICULUM" PATTERNED ON MINISTRY-LEVEL ISSUE AREAS

[3.](#) (C) The "Summer University" is an informal, offsite sort of event at which party members debate issues, network and plan strategy. The workshops of this year's Socialist Party (PS) "Summer University" each focused on an issue area dealt with by a different government ministry. The panels leading the workshops included representatives of the different factions -- "currents" in PS parlance -- dividing the party. According to the organizer of this year's "Summer University", Jean-Christophe Cambadélis (a National Assembly (NA) member from Paris) the idea was to "confront the different currents' proposals" in key issue areas in order to inform the debate over the different currents' platform proposals for the party. Most of the PS's 150,000 or so party members will vote -- on Tuesday, November 9 to be exact -- on contending platforms in the run-up to the party congress scheduled for November 18 - 20. The results of the voting, through a complex, proportional system, determine the leadership of the party until the next party congress.

CALM OF DEBATE MASKS BITTERNESS OF DIVISIONS

[3.](#) (C) The debate in the two dozen different workshops was carefully orchestrated to ensure that the top leaders of the two principal factions (ref C) never confronted one another on the same stage. Former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius never crossed paths with party National Secretary Francois Hollande nor with former Economy Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Fabius is aiming to "federate" all those in the party who favor a more contestatory -- leftist and populist -- approach to social and economic policy. Hollande, as the top party official, and Strauss-Kahn, one of the most credible of the PS's many presidential contenders, are emerging as the "duo of reference" for the diverse, and

by comparison realist and progressive, party establishment. The carefully observed civility of the debate in the workshops contrasted starkly with the resentment just under the surface against those like Fabius, who failed to respect the party's vote last December in support of the EU Constitutional treaty.

PARTY ESTABLISHMENT CONFIDENT IT WILL RETAIN CONTROL

14. (C) The resentment against Fabius and other "traitors to the party rules" is still running strong among rank-and-file members. Hollande, in his self-appointed role as the champion of those who believe party members should be the final arbiters of decisions on the party's platform and nominees, retains the support even of many party members who voted against the proposed EU constitution last May. For these reasons, Hollande, and the constellation of PS luminaries who support his management of the party, are confident that they can hold off the assault on the party leadership being mounted by Fabius and his allies.

FABIUS FAILS TO SPARK ENTHUSIASM

15. (C) Fabius had hoped to trigger a groundswell of support for his cause at the "Summer University." He failed to do so. Even those party currents that contest the leadership of Hollande -- and the ever more "social democratic" approach it represents -- are keeping their distance from Fabius, at least for now. The anti-American populists of the New World (NM) current led by NA member and former minister Henri Emmanuelli and Senator and former minister Jean-Luc Melanchon will back Fabius in the end. Emmanuelli and Melanchon, however, intend to put their own platform proposal ("motion" in PS lingo) to the party membership in the run-up to November's congress. (Fabius will probably associate himself with others rather than present his own motion, because, as one rank-and-file party member put it, "he wouldn't dare put up his own motion -- it would show how little support he has.")

THE "NEW SOCIALIST PARTY" (NPS)

16. (C) The New Socialist Party (NPS), a current of "neo-radical," anti-globalization populists led by NA member Arnaud Montebourg and EU Parliamentarian Vincent Peillon, is currently divided (cynics say tactically) over whether to support Fabius (Montebourg is for, Peillon against). Long-time observers of the PS (in this case Jean-Christophe Le Duigou of the once communist General Confederation of Labor (CGT)) call this NPS maneuver a "transparent effort" to create a "swing vote" that, come the party congress, can "sell itself" to one or the other camp for "what they are all interested in but never talk about" -- their faction members' selection to be the party's candidates for a range of legislative and local offices.

MULTIPLICITY OF WOULD-BE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

17. (C) According to Le Duigou, the national party leadership's role in deciding who runs for what also explains the plethora of candidates for the party's presidential nomination. Many of these -- former ministers Jacques Lang, Elizabeth Guigou, and Martine Aubry for example -- have little possibility of winning the nomination, and less possibility of winning the election thereafter (though Lang currently leads in the opinion polls among PS contenders). By hinting at a candidacy of their own however (which the media willingly strings along), they strengthen their hand in the complex intra-party poker game of drawing up the party's candidate lists for a range of legislative and local offices.

FABIUS PLUS NM PLUS NPS IS A LONG SHOT, BUT POSSIBLE

18. (C) The rejection of the proposed EU Constitution last May (ref E) by a healthy majority of voters was, in large part, also a rejection of France's political class. Fabius and his allies in the PS interpret this vote -- a strong majority of left-leaning voters voted 'no' -- as representing a lasting, popular sentiment that is demanding an end to business as usual in the way France is ruled. Indeed, the earthquake of the constitutional referendum has prompted a range of reform proposals from parties of both left and right and center (ref D). If the anti-establishment feeling that triumphed in May should turn out to have staying power, it is conceivable that, come next November, there may be more PS party members than there are now ready to side with the left of the party and support its call for radical change. It is still a long shot, however.

COUNTDOWN TO COMPROMISE OR SHOWDOWN

19. (C) Hollande, in his closing address to "University" attendees, stressed his conviction that the party would remain unified and would settle on a unifying platform at the upcoming November congress. The contending platform proposals in their final form must be submitted by September 17 for the consideration of party members. Party members

will vote on them on November 9. Then, at the congress, a large committee (with representation proportional to the vote results) will try to hammer out a compromise platform that all can support. This worked at the last party congress in May 2003, in a deal that saw Hollande take the number one slot in the party hierarchy and Fabius the number two position.

AND IT MAY WORK AGAIN THIS TIME

110. (C) The one thing about which Fabius and Hollande -- and nearly every other active, PS politician -- agree is that splitting the party is tantamount to abandoning the next presidential election to the center-right's candidate. While the ideological differences between neo-radical populists and progressive social democrats are now more marked than before, people such as Fabius and Strauss-Kahn know this is their last shot at the presidency. The system is such that, in the back-rooms, there are lots of chips in play to fashion compromises with second-tier factional leaders and their followers. The trick will be to come to agreement on a compromise presidential candidate with strong credentials among those calling for aggressive, "neo-radical" reform and those calling for the PS to become a social democratic party similar to those in other major European countries. Many of the "Summer University" attendees, asked which PS leaders would be able to best fill that role, named former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and, somewhat surprisingly, former Environment Minister and NA member Segolene Royal (who happens to be Francois Hollande's longtime domestic partner).

COMMENT

111. (C) The PS has a long tradition of democratic decision-making by party members. Those, like Hollande, who trust the democratic process, believe that it will -- somehow -- catalyze a solution to the party's critical problems: deep ideological division and no strong candidate for 2007. It is far too early to try and project what the socialists' solution to this tandem of problems will turn out to be. That Fabius got right the temper of the left's electorate, and that the party leadership's position lost among its own voters, does give Fabius and the 'no' camp some democratic credibility. As Fabius supporter and EU Parliamentarian Henri Weber said, "Hollande speaks for the party; Fabius speaks for the people." It remains to be seen how the PS will square the circle of a realist party leadership and an electorate clearly tempted by more radical approaches. Participants at the "Summer University" are a self-selection of the most active party members. They were intensely interested in the myriad ways the PS might meet its current, daunting challenges. Contrary to what much press coverage would have people believe, most seemed quite serene, expressing full confidence that they, as the party members, would eventually work something out for their party through open debate and free and fair balloting. END COMMENT.

NOTE

112. (U) For daily updates on this and other France internal political and external relations issues subscribe to Embassy Paris SIPRNet Daily Report -- at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm> or e-mail OrdemanLT@state.sgov.gov.
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